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FIRST COUNTRY COOPERATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE COMOROS (1997-2001)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The country cooperation framework was prepared by the Government of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros in close collaboration with UNDP and following a broad national consultation process. It is consistent with the guidelines of the country strategy note concerning the strategy for support from the entire United Nations system.

2. The country cooperation framework establishes the guidelines and strategy for UNDP in support of the development efforts of the Comoros for the period 1997-2001. It is based on the concept of sustainable human development and identifies poverty reduction as the priority area of UNDP action.

I. DEVELOPMENT SITUATION FROM A SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

3. The Comoros is classified as a least developed country (LDC). In terms of the human development index drawn up by UNDP, the Comoros ranked 139th in the world in 1995. The literacy rate is low and the general state of health is precarious. There are great disparities in standards of living and large segments of the population are living in poverty. There are also marked inequalities between the respective situations of men and women.

4. The Comoros is experiencing rapid population growth. The result is a strong demand for education and health and a very high unemployment rate. Above all, the population of the Comoros is becoming poorer every day, since economic growth is lagging considerably behind the population increase. The sustainable development of the Comoros is also particularly threatened by the rapid degradation of its natural environment, both marine and terrestrial.

5. Economic growth is impeded by a number of structural constraints. Human resources development is hindered by shortcomings in the educational system. State intervention continues to stifle economic activity and is blocking the development of the private sector. The economy is not competitive because it is hampered by a lack of skilled human resources and high production costs. The Comoros has a narrow export base, limited to a few agricultural commodities. Deficiencies in the conduct of State affairs and in the management of public resources are also having repercussions on private initiative and productivity.

6. The political instability experienced by the Comoros since its accession to independence has also been a significant hindrance to its development. The rule of law is still shaky and, despite a strong tradition of community involvement, civil society has not yet acquired the dynamism and the necessary capacities to become a motor of social change.

7. The following priorities have been identified in order to chart a course of sustainable and equitable development:

(a) Strengthening of governance by strengthening the rule of law, improving the management of public resources, and enhancing the participation of local communities in the development process;

(b) Improvement of the competitiveness of the Comoros by restoring macroeconomic stability, improving the management of the public sector and creating favourable conditions for productive investment while supporting private initiative;

(c) Development of human capital and curbing of population growth by improving the quality and accessibility of education and training and of the health services and creating stable employment on the basis of private initiative; and

(d) Conservation of the fragile environment of the Comoros by emphasizing conservation, increasing the productivity and diversification of agriculture, and promoting land ownership policies and environmental protection.

8. In this context, marked progress was made in the formulation of development policies during the recent period. In 1994, a national policy on the environment and an environmental plan of action were adopted, which propose a set of strategies to preserve the biodiversity of the Comoros. A plan for the development of the health sector, Perspectives to the year 2010, was also adopted in 1994. Its main objectives are to slow down population growth, reduce maternal and infant mortality and morbidity rates, and ensure a nutritional balance for the entire population. The main features of the recent master plan for education consist of improving access to and the quality of education, enhancing technical and vocational training, and strengthening planning structures. Lastly, following the World Summit for Social Development, the Government decided to prepare a national poverty eradication strategy. This overall strategy for the medium and long term will incorporate the various sectoral development strategies in a common framework.

II. IMPACT OF UNDP COOPERATION

9. During the fifth programming cycle (1992-1996), UNDP assistance was concentrated on four areas: (a) support for macroeconomic management and administrative reform; (b) development of the private sector; (c) strengthening of public health; and (d) conservation of the environment. A number of significant and sustainable results were achieved. The support provided in the area of the environment made it possible to formulate the national environment policy and environmental plan of action and to strengthen national structures responsible for the environment. In the area of health, the pilot experience of the regional health centre in Mitsoudjé facilitated the development of a comprehensive reform of the public health system. With regard to the development of the private sector, UNDP contributed to the establishment of an autonomous centre for support to entrepreneurs.

10. While UNDP assistance has led to undeniable progress, the context in which it has been provided has not always made it possible to ensure that the activities undertaken are sustainable. The results of UNDP activities in

support of macroeconomic reforms remain modest. This is mainly because the administration, lacking resources and skilled personnel, has difficulty operating; moreover, its management capacity has been greatly weakened by political instability.

11. Following the mid-term review in June 1994, new initiatives were launched. An ambitious resource mobilization strategy was carried out. The programme was refocussed on sustainable human development, and UNDP is assisting the Government in the formulation of the national poverty eradication strategy. UNDP is contributing more actively to the strengthening of aid coordination at the grass-roots level. Lastly, in the context of its support for governance, UNDP greatly facilitated the return to an institutional order through preparation for the presidential elections in March 1996.

12. A review of the results of UNDP activities shows the need, in view of the limited available resources, to continue to concentrate assistance more in the key areas of the war against poverty, through a true programme approach. Steps should be taken to intensify the policy dialogue and, at the same time, give priority to innovative grass-roots activities with high potential conducted directly with communities and local associations with a view to strengthening the latter's capacity. Lastly, UNDP activities have concentrated too much on substitution assistance, the limitations of which are now being perceived. Efforts must focus on true capacity-building.

III. STRATEGY AND THEMATIC AREAS

Overall strategy

13. The main objective of UNDP cooperation is to support the efforts of the Comoros for sustainable human development and poverty eradication.

14. UNDP support will be provided through activities aimed at sustainable capacity-building, to the exclusion of palliative and short-term measures. In this context, UNDP will emphasize the national execution modality and promote the use of national expertise. Advisory and training activities will make up the predominant part of UNDP inputs, with the emphasis on training *in situ* or in the subregion. Capacity-building also requires that UNDP activities should be fully integrated in the local environment, mobilizing each of the parties concerned.

15. The question of the integration of women in development, which is a fundamental issue for the future of the Comoros, will take on special relevance in the new UNDP programme. All the activities carried out will highlight the need for specific support to improve the status of women and strengthen their role in development. Close cooperation will be developed with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

16. UNDP action, which will emphasize the programme approach, will be carried out at three levels: first, within the framework of policy dialogue, UNDP will support national authorities in the development of medium-term policies and development strategies for sustainable human development and in particular the

national poverty eradication strategy. This support will be combined with action carried out at the level of civil society to develop a national dialogue on poverty, empower grass-roots communities and their associations to manage the development process, and forge alliances between the different segments of society, the national authorities and the donor community.

17. Second, UNDP will continue its action in the area of aid coordination and resource mobilization to meet national development priorities. UNDP support will be provided, in particular, through the round-table mechanism and through the activities of the United Nations resident coordinator. It will also aim to strengthen the capacities of national institutions responsible for aid coordination. UNDP will also facilitate the incorporation into national development policies of the recommendations of United Nations conferences and the follow-up to international conventions and agreements.

18. Lastly, UNDP will support the implementation of national development programmes in priority areas of sustainable human development. These capacity-building activities will be formulated and carried out with the close participation of the local communities and associations concerned, which are regarded as full-fledged partners.

Thematic areas

19. Because of its limited resources, UNDP will have to concentrate its assistance on a small number of well-defined areas so as to optimize its impact. It is proposed that UNDP action should be developed around four complementary areas:

(a) Strengthening of governance;

(b) Improvement of decentralized health services through a strengthening of community participation;

(c) Strengthening of production capacities and development of sustainable livelihoods for the most disadvantaged; and

(d) Environmental conservation.

20. The proposed thematic areas accord with national development priorities, as identified in section I of this document, namely (a) strengthening of governance; (b) improvement of the competitiveness of the Comoros, and hence strengthening of the private sector; (c) development of human capital and curbing of population growth; (d) environmental conservation. The selection made will enable the best use to be made of the comparative advantages of UNDP in its action for sustainable human development and ensure full complementarity between UNDP action and that of other development partners. There are also strong synergies and many links between the proposed areas. For each thematic area, specific indicators will be defined so as to measure the impact of UNDP inputs.

A. Strengthening of governance

21. The sustainable human development of the Comoros requires an in-depth improvement in public administration within the framework of the rule of law where democratic institutions play their proper role. UNDP is particularly well-placed to support government actions to strengthen governance in a manner complementary to the interventions proposed by other donors within the context of a framework approach. UNDP will be assisting on four fronts through closely complementary activities.

22. First, UNDP will help strengthen the Federal Assembly. While France is supporting the reorganization of the judicial branch, it is also necessary to support the legislative branch. The aim will be, through active collaboration, to train members of the Assembly and to support the latter's work in its two major areas of competence: drafting and passage of laws, and oversight and enforcement of the finance law. UNDP intervention should thus facilitate the establishment of a true legislative authority.

23. Second, UNDP will support the establishment of a viable and reliable national civil registry system. The existence of such a system, viewed as a priority by the Government and the international community, is first of all a basic condition for the strengthening of the democratic process. It will also facilitate the proper implementation of the Family Code now under preparation, and make it possible to gather statistical data which are essential for monitoring population policies.

24. Third, UNDP will make its contribution to the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women by facilitating the establishment and strengthening of structures for the representation of women at all levels of community and political life. This activity will rely on the national women and development network already in place.

25. Finally, UNDP, in collaboration with all other development partners and the Bretton Woods institutions in particular, will help strengthen the capacity of national institutions in respect of aid coordination, negotiation with donors and follow-up to the adjustment programme.

B. Improvement of decentralized health services through a strengthening of community participation

26. Under the heading of implementation of the health system reform in accordance with the guidelines of the health care development plan "Perspectives to the year 2010", UNDP actions will move away from assistance as substitution and take on a new form. Henceforward, they will be aimed at sustainable capacity-building in close collaboration with the partners concerned.

27. UNDP will conduct joint activities with the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) focusing on reproductive health, and will complement the activities conducted by other donors, including France, which supports the Moroni central hospital and is conducting several activities

nearby, the World Bank, which is financing a broad investment programme, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

28. UNDP will support the strengthening of decentralized health care structures, mainly at district level, through a participatory approach designed to build capacity within local communities and grass-roots organizations to enable them to become the decision-making partners in the operation and management of those structures. In the five districts selected, UNDP contributions of advisory services, training and equipment should lead to the emergence of independent health centres managed by community associations and providing preventive care and treatment for the benefit of all.

29. Through structures recently put into place under the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNDP will continue to support the national programme to combat AIDS as an integral part of its primary health care and health education activities.

30. Indicators will be developed to measure the impact of the programme on three levels: improvement of the overall health of the population and priority target groups, improvement in family planning coverage, and degree of community responsibility for health centres, and health education and prevention activities.

C. Strengthening of production capacities and development of sustainable livelihoods for the most disadvantaged

31. The Comoros will succeed in overcoming poverty by creating sustainable livelihoods for all. UNDP activities previously conducted through support to the Association for the Promotion of the Private Sector are worth continuing, using a new and complementary approach.

32. Here again, activities will be conducted directly with the local communities and their groups, within the framework of the national employment policy. UNDP will foster the implementation of labour-intensive income-generating activities with the aim of facilitating the creation of viable and productive micro-businesses in the areas supported by the programme. Special emphasis will be placed on those most often excluded from programmes in support of the private sector - the rural poor, women and young people - by relying on the network of local community groups.

33. UNDP action will complement ongoing programmes which seek primarily to finance local investment projects by providing counterpart manpower. UNDP will take a more long-term approach that will permit the creation of sustainable micro-businesses, jobs and income. UNDP will assist in identifying viable projects with the community and interested parties, facilitate mobilization of the necessary resources, monitor implementation and provide what is needed to train the entrepreneurs. Support will also be requested from the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF).

34. During the initial phase, UNDP will concentrate its activities in two priority zones, the poor neighbourhoods of Moroni and the rural region of

Nioumakele in Anjouan, which is experiencing very strong demographic pressure and where poverty is rapidly gaining ground. In this zone, UNDP activities will rely on the results of the project in support of small producers, financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), for the creation of producers' associations.

35. The medium-term impact of the programme will be measured in terms of diversification of production, the number of micro-businesses and sustainable jobs created and the volume of additional income generated.

D. Environmental conservation

36. The spread of poverty and environmental degradation are closely linked. UNDP, which took the initiative in the Comoros to integrate an environmental dimension into development policies, will support the implementation of the National Environmental Policy (NEP) and the Plan of Action for the Environment (PAE), approved by the October 1994 round table conference.

37. UNDP will support the implementation of the national programme for the conservation of biodiversity under the Plan of Action for the Environment. This programme has financing from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Capacity 21, and will be implemented during the period 1997-2001. It will provide support for capacity-building in implementation, coordination and monitoring of the NEP and PAE, with the effective participation of the entire population. The specific objectives of the programme are: (a) to develop national and local capacity to preserve biodiversity; (b) to designate a network of marine and land-based sanctuaries; (c) to implement plans of action for the preservation of the species and ecosystems to be protected; (d) to stimulate a variety of economic activities to reduce pressure from human activity, inter alia, by developing eco-tourism; and (e) to develop a viable system of information and management of biodiversity in the Comoros.

38. The programme supported by UNDP is crucial to preserve the biodiversity of the Comoros and ensure the country's sustainable development. The expected impact of the programme will be measured essentially by monitoring a range of indicators relating to the plans of action for the preservation of species and eco-systems within the sanctuaries, by the enhanced capacity of community associations and national institutions to implement the Plan of Action for the Environment, and by the expected diversification of economic activity.

IV. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

39. National execution will continue to be developed progressively during the new programming cycle. As soon as the relevant national institutions have demonstrated their capacity, national execution will be the preferred option. Accordingly, beginning in 1997, the programme for the strengthening of decentralized health care services will be proposed for execution by the Ministry of Health, with the support of an international non-governmental organization. The environmental conservation programme will be proposed for execution by the Office of the Environment with major support from the

International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources - World Conservation Union (IUCN). On the other hand, it will be proposed that the programme for the strengthening of production capacities should be executed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), since no national institution currently has the capacity to implement it. It is also proposed that the interventions proposed under the programme for strengthening governance should be executed by a United Nations specialized agency still to be determined. These arrangements will be reconsidered during the mid-term review of the country cooperation framework.

40. As in the past, UNDP will continue to call on the technical cooperation resources of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), using those specialists mainly for advisory and training tasks. Given equal ability, UNDP will favour the use of national experts. It will also promote technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) especially within the Indian Ocean Commission. UNDP will maintain close cooperation with national non-governmental organizations and will ensure that their expertise is put to the best use.

41. In 1999, there will be a mid-term review of the new cooperation framework for the period 1997-2001 and a report will be submitted to the UNDP Executive Board.

42. UNDP will continue to pursue an ambitious resource mobilization strategy. UNDP core resources allocated to the Comoros for the period 1997-1999 will probably amount to a maximum of $3.9 million or, by extrapolation, to $6.5 million for the period 1997-2001. The biodiversity conservation programme will receive $2.4 million from GEF and $0.5 million from Capacity 21. Consultations are being held with UNCDF and other partners with a view to mobilizing approximately $2 million for the programme to develop production capacity and $1 million for the programmes in support of governance and the health sector.

Annex

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION TARGET TABLE FOR THE COMOROS (1997-2001)

(In thousands of United States dollars)

Source	Amount	Comments
UNDP CORE FUNDS		
Estimated IPF carry-over	(282)	
TRAC 1.1.1	3 970	Assigned immediately to country.
TRAC 1.1.2	0 to 66.7 per cent of TRAC 1.1.1	This range of percentages is presented for initial planning purposes only. The actual assignment will depend on the availability of high-quality programmes. Any increase in the range of percentages would also be subject to availability of resources.
SPPD/STS	352	
Subtotal	4 040[a]	
NON-CORE FUNDS		
Government cost-sharing	-	
Sustainable development funds	2 400	GEF
Third-party cost-sharing	1 000	
Funds, trust funds and other: UNCDF Capacity 21	2 900 2 400 500	
Subtotal	6 300	
GRAND TOTAL	10 340[a]	

[a] Not inclusive of TRAC 1.1.2, which is allocated regionally for subsequent country application.

Abbreviations: GEF = Global Environment Facility; IPF = indicative planning figure; SPPD = support for policy and programme development; STS = support for technical services; and TRAC = target for resource assignment from the core; UNCDF = United Nations Capital Development Fund.